

Message Text

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14

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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R 140451Z AUG 75

FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6379

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY MANILA

CINCPAC

AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

AMCONSUL SYDNEY

C O N F I D E N T I A L CANBERRA 5459

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: AS, TH, XC, PFOR, MARR

SUBJ: DFA DEBRIEFING ON VISIT OF THAI FOREIGN MINISTER

REF: CANBERRA 5422

1. SUMMARY: GOA STILL APPEARS TO BE PUSHING THAIS TO PHASE OUT SEATO QUICKLY. END SUMMARY

2. ON AUGUST 13 EMBOFF WAS DEBRIEFED BY DFA OFFICIALS ON VISIT OF THAI FOREIGN MINISTER CHATICHAI CHOONHAVAN. SUBJECTS COVERED DURING DISCUSSIONS WERE SEATO, THAI RELATIONS WITH INDOCHINESE STATES, OPENING OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN THAILAND AND PRC, AND REFUGEES IN THAILAND.

3. ON SEATO THE THAI FOREIGN MINISTER TOLD THE AUSTRALIANS THAT AT A RECENT MEETING IN MANILA MARCOS WAS EAGER TO END SEATO QUICKLY. THE THAIS TOLD MARCOS THAT SEATO SHOULD BE PHASED OUT GRADUALLY AND THAT THAILAND STILL PLACED GREAT VALUE ON RETAIN-
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ING THE MANILA TREATY. THE THAIS THOUGHT THAT THE BEST WAY TO

PROCEED WAS TO ASK SEATO'S SECRETARY GENERAL AT THE NEXT SEATO MEETING TO MAKE A STUDY ON HOW TO PHASE OUT SEATO. FOREIGN MINISTER WILLESEE SAID AUSTRALIA AGREED WITH THIS APPROACH BUT FELT THINGS SHOULD MOVE A LITTLE FASTER. IN AUSTRALIA'S VIEW THE CONTINUED EXISTENCE OF SEATO WAS A STICK WHICH COULD BE USED BY HANOI AND PEKING TO BEAT SEATO MEMBERS WITH. IN AUSTRALIA'S VIEW THERE WOULD BE VALUE IN INSTRUCTING THE SEATO SECRETARY GENERAL TO MAKE A STUDY ON PHASING SEATO OUT IMMEDIATELY SO THAT THE PLAN COULD BE REVIEWED AT THE SEPTEMBER SEATO MEETING IN NEW YORK. IF THIS COULD BE DONE THE WHOLE PROCESS COULD BE SPEEDED UP BY A YEAR. ACCORDING TO THE AUSTRALIANS, CHATICHAI CHOONHAVAN AGREED TO THIS SUGGESTION. WILLESEE THEN SAID THAT IF THIS DECISION WERE TAKEN HE SAW NO NEED FOR ANY MORE ANNUAL SEATO MEETINGS AFTER THE SEPTEMBER 75 MEETING IN NEW YORK. CHATICHAI CHOONHAVAN REPORTEDLY AGREED TO THIS AS WELL. CHATICHAI CHOONHAVAN ALSO SAID THAT THAILAND WAS INTERESTED IN RETAINING SEATO'S TROPICAL DISEASE LAB AS WELL AS THE RESEARCH SEATO HAD COMPILED ON INFILTRATORS AND INSURGENCIES. WILLESEE SAID AUSTRALIA BELIEVED IT WOULD BE A GOOD THING IF NO OVERT SEATO MILITARY FUNCTIONS WERE LEFT INTACT. CHATICHAI AGREED.

4. COMMENTING ON THAI RELATIONS WITH INDOCHINESE STATES, THE THAI FOREIGN MINISTER SAID THAT PROBLEMS WITH LAOS AND CAMBODIA WERE NOT THOUGHT TO BE INSURMOUNTABLE. THE THAIS WERE ATTEMPTING TO TAKE A POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS BOTH STATES AND HOPED TO SEE BOTH GOVERNMENTS TAKE STANCES INDEPENDENT FROM HANOI AND IN ESSENCE BECOME PARTIAL BUFFERS BETWEEN HANOI AND THAILAND. THE MOST IMMEDIATE PROBLEMS WERE THE REFUGEES IN THAILAND FROM LAOS AND CAMBODIA. THE RIGHT WING REFUGEES FROM LAOS WERE A SOURCE OF EMBARRASSMENT TO THE THAIS. THE THAIS WANT THEM EITHER TO LEAVE THAILAND OR TO RETURN TO LAOS. THE PROBLEM OF THE CAMBODIAN REFUGEES WAS MORE COMPLICATED. CONDITIONS IN THE REFUGEE CAMPS ARE SO SUPERIOR TO CONDITIONS IN CAMBODIA THAT MOST OF THE REFUGEES DO NOT WANT TO RETURN TO CAMBODIA. THAILAND IS RELUCTANT TO FORCE THEM TO RETURN TO CAMBODIA WHEN THERE IS A REAL RISK THAT THEY WILL BE EXECUTED. SIHANOUK IS INTERESTED IN RESUMING DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH THAILAND BUT THE THAI DO NOT BELIEVE HE IS IN ANY POSITION TO DO SO OR TO RETURN TO CAMBODIA BECAUSE CAMBODIA IS NOW FIRMLY IN THE SOVIET CAMP.

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5. THE THAI BELIEVE THAT THE SINO-SOVIET DISPUTE IS INTENSIFYING AND WERE IMPRESSED BY THE FACT THAT THE CHINESE ARRANGED FOR THE THAI VISIT TO PEKING IN LESS THAN EIGHT DAYS, LAID ON A LAVISH WELCOME, ACCEPTED THE PROPOSED THAI COMMUNIQUE WITHOUT CHANGING A WORD, AND AGREED TO ESTABLISH DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS. THESE ACTIONS CONVINCED THE THAI THAT THE CHINESE ARE DESPERATELY INTERESTED IN MAKING NEW FRIENDS.
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